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ABSTRACT

This document, the sixth of seven essays, investigates the relationship of the church, the university and urban society in the area of politics, education, and ministry. This manual describes a basic methodology of the project, "Action-research". The essay is of the "how to do it" breed, with a detailed description of the stages in an action-research project, some of the basic research tools, and suggestions regarding organization. Action-research, in which research is conceived as a process of political action, has demonstrated its utility as a training device for professionals and students as an organization tool for citizens' groups wishing to make an impact on their community. Related documents are HE 004 357, HE 004 367, and HE 004 355. (Author/MJM)

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ACTION-RESEARCH: A NEW STYLE OF POLITICS, EDUCATION AND MINISTRY

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Washington, D.C.

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Parker J. Palmer

Elden Jacobson

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PREFACE

As one of these essays indicates, a project on "Church, University and Urban Society" calls to mind the classic question, "Define the universe and give two examples." The size of the subject is matched by the variety of responses which colleges, universities, and churches have been making in recent years to the urban scene, and by the urgency, not always supported by clear directions, which they have felt seeking to confront the pressures and demands of urban America.

The Department of Higher Education of the National Council of Churches, together with the boards of higher education of a number of denominations, came to believe in the late 1960's that the problems of urban society were some of the important intersections of common concern between church and university.

The Department was pleased, therefore, to receive in early 1969 a substantial grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation which was joined with special funds from church agencies, both in higher education and national missions, for a two-year action-research project on "Church, University and Urban Society." Defining the issues has been a continuing task of the study itself, as will be seen in these reports, but the basic purpose of the project was to discover ways in which to increase the capacity and the commitment of churches and academic institutions to meet the problems of urban society.

The project was carried on from mid-1969 to mid-1971 by two able sociologists, Dr. Elden E. Jacobson and Dr. Parker J. Palmer, Senior Associates in the Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies, Washington, D. C. Dr. Jacobson received his Ph.D. in the sociology of religion in 1966 from Yale University and Dr. Palmer received his in sociology in 1970 from the University of California at Berkeley. Both men had research and teaching experience before coming to the Washington Center and both participated

in the comprehensive Danforth Study of Campus Ministries, undertaken by the late Kenneth Underwood and published under the title, The Church, the University, and Social Policy (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1969).

Elden Jacobson and Parker Palmer were eminently qualified for this current study by their academic training and their search for new styles of professional life, by their religious commitment and their search for new modes of corporate religious responsibility. The Department of Higher Education is deeply grateful to them for the imagination and insight they have brought to this undertaking. We are particularly pleased that the ideas and styles they have developed in this project will receive a continuing embodiment in a new center to which they will be attached, the Institute for Public Life in Silver Spring, Maryland.

The following persons served on an Advisory Commission to the "Church, University and Urban Society" project:

Morris T. Keeton, Vice-President of Antioch College, Chairman
Edwin G. Bennett, National Staff, Team for Ministry in Higher Education, Episcopal Church
William Cannon, Vice-President for Programs and Projects, University of Chicago
Harvey Cox, Associate Professor, Church and Society, Harvard Divinity School
Charles W. Doak, Campus Minister, University of California at Los Angeles
Brooks Hays, Director of Ecumenical Studies, Wake Forest University, former Congressman from Arkansas
John Jordan, Executive Secretary, Office of University World, National Division, Board of Missions of the United Methodist Church
Arthur Paris, Graduate Student in Sociology, Northwestern University
Hans B. C. Spiegel, Professor of Urban Affairs, Hunter College of the City University of New York
George Todd, Associate for Urban and Industrial Ministries (Board of National Missions), and Secretary, Joint Office of Urban and Industrial Ministries (with COEMAR), United Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.
Charles Z. Wilson, Jr., Assistant Vice-Chancellor for Educational Planning and Program, University of California at Los Angeles

The Department of Higher Education is indebted to Dr. Morris Keeton, chairman, and all the members of this Commission for the time they gave to meetings and occasional special assignments, and for the advice and interaction of ideas they afforded the staff throughout the project.

It will be understood that the freedom of the staff, Elden Jacobson and Parker Palmer, is enhanced by issuing these reports over their own names. They do not necessarily express the views either of the Advisory Commission or the Department of Higher Education.

The Department expresses its gratitude to the Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies for making possible the services of the staff, to the Sloan Foundation and church agencies for providing financial support, and again to Messrs. Jacobson and Palmer for giving themselves so generously to it.

William N. Lovell
Executive Director
Department of Higher Education
National Council of Churches

INTRODUCTION

Church-University-Urban Society. Such is the fashion--old coin for academic and theologian alike--by which our pretensions exceed our reach. This booklet, one of seven in a series, is the work of two academic sociologists, invited by the Department of Higher Education, National Council of Churches, to investigate the marvelous amorphousness this project's title suggests. For two years we have invested nearly all of our professional interest and time, and a good bit privately, in exploring these three ideas--two institutions and a given context--both as separate, identifiable foci of curiosity and as interacting social institutions in this society's increasingly urbanized work and life.

The style has been activist; we have not hesitated to intervene when invited to do so, and we have likewise set into motion a variety of projects in which all involved were self-consciously pressing for more-adequate ways of "getting it together." So it is, we argue, that one learns.

The possibilities, of course, were overwhelming; our response partial and uneven. Yet it is not mere modesty or a sense of caution that leads us to say so. This project was originally but one of six major, interrelated inquiries conceived in 1968 by nationally known academics and churchmen, inquiries that spanned quite nearly the whole of higher education. Yet the practical realities--of time and money and political power --were such that only some parts survived, this one funded at one-eighth the amount initially sought. An instructive process, to be sure, one depressingly illustrative of the usual manner this society seems bent upon confronting the demonic forces now corroding its inward parts, wherein the grandeur of purpose seems dramatically at odds with achieved result. We mean no disrespect to our immediate sponsors; on the contrary, the Department of Higher Education, and our parent institution, the Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies, have shared with us that extra mile in amazingly good grace. But the lack of careful, sophisticated, thoughtful

experimentation with new forms and new potentials within both church and university is dispiritingly evident to those who have looked. This society's capacity for selective inattention seems scarcely capable of overstatement.

Yet straws there are--often laden with rhetoric and self-protection-but straws none-the-less. And it is those straws that commanded our greater attention as they, first in fact were and are, and as, secondly, situations that hold wider promise. As the briefest of introductions to these seven papers, the following descriptive statements are offered to the reader:

1. The Church, the University and Urban Society: A Problem in Power.
   In this essay, we describe the basic conceptual focus and theoretical framework of the two-year project. Urban society is defined in terms of power, and the role of church and university in it is viewed as essentially marginal unless and until they enter at the point of power. Varieties of power are assayed and strategies for their use are discussed. The essay forms a backdrop for much we have written elsewhere in this series.

2. The Church, the University and Urban Society: Focus on the Church.
   This essay focuses the general concerns of the project on the church. In it, we are particularly concerned with the parish or congregation, that much-neglected but essential component of the church at large. We also explore some of the problems inherent in the specialized ministries (particularly campus and urban), national offices and agencies, and the seminaries.

3. The Church, the University and Urban Society: Implications for the University.
   This essay explores the conceptual, that is to say, the disciplinary, basis of the modern university. In it we conclude that the changing nature of social reality is increasingly undermining fragmented disciplinary inquiry, which in turn is and will continue

to constitute the universities' real "irrelevance." Because we see no grounds for believing that it will fundamentally re-order itself, alternatives to the university will be, and are being, created.

4. The Power of Development: Some Possibilities We See.
This is an analysis, from our experience, of middle- and upper-middle-class suburban life, and the crisis of authority now endemic within social institutions--with emphasis upon the church --that purport to serve this society. We believe these two phenomena are closely related and that church bureaucrats have not been particularly imaginative in their treatment of either. The question of "development" is explored as one partial means of rethinking national/local relationships.

5. Urban Curricula and the Liberal Arts College.
This is a report of our examination of the liberal arts colleges' response to things "urban," with particular attention to "urban semester" programs and their conceptual and practical weaknesses. Drawing sharp distinctions between universities and colleges, we have tried to suggest alternative ways for addressing what is surely a critical dimension of modern society; the focus now upon the role of "citizen" and "social invention." We have also commented at length on the academic politics of getting from here to there.

6. Action-Research: A New Style of Politics, Education and Ministry.
In this manual, we describe a basic methodology of the project, "action-research." The essay is of the "how to do it" breed, with a detailed description of the stages in an action-research project, some of the basic research tools, and suggestions regarding organization. Action-research, in which research is conceived as a process of political action, has demonstrated its utility as a training device for professionals and students and as an organization tool for citizens' groups wishing to make an impact in their community.

7. The Public Life: Its Decline and Renewal.
This final essay in the series articulates our concern for the "public life" in the context of church, university and urban society. For us, the public life involves not only traditional political institutions and processes, but the emerging options to them. We discuss the question of options as a critical one, given the crisis of contemporary life and politics. This essay also has a strong "how to do it" dimension in its description of one of the field experiments which continue beyond the life of the larger project--the Institute for Public Life. It is in the Institute that we continue to act out the implications of our two-year effort for the National Council of Churches.

As with these seven essays so, too, with the project itself: they emerge from two persons whose unity of purpose and mutuality of spirit have come to constitute unique experiences for us both. Written words, self-evidently, must finally derive from a single pen and for the sake of form, names appear on each title page with the principal writer cited first. Authorship, however, is fully shared--in concept, result, and intensity of feeling--and we make no distinctions in our defense of and responsibility for the whole of this series.

Each essay has been written to stand largely on its own merits; as such, repetition occurs from time to time, from one piece to the others. We trust it will not distract the carefully attentive reader.

We warmly acknowledge our considerable indebtedness to the Reverend William N. Lovell, Director of the Department of Higher Education, and Dr. Royce Hanson, President of the Washington Center. Both of these men were very supportive without imposing direction, and we moved with complete freedom in the shaping of this inquiry of involvement. We wish also to thank the members of our Advisory Commission; despite the inadequacies of this particular form of securing advice and assistance, several

of these men served both us and the people we studied in exemplary fashion. We likewise thank that multitude of people who literally reside from coast to coast within those situations we discuss. They have taught us much, and are thereby responsible, to a most considerable degree, for whatever merit our writings contain.

All deficiencies of analysis and interpretation are, of course, ours alone.

Elden E. Jacobson and Parker J. Palmer
Washington, D. C.
June, 1971

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I. INTRODUCTION

"What can I do?" The age-old question is being asked with increasing frequency and mounting urgency in our day. More and more people are becoming sensitive to the troubles that permeate American society. At the same time the American system seems to be growing more complex and confusing. Many people, lacking the competence to cut through the knotted web of social ills, are discovering that sensitivity alone is not so much a solution as part of the problem: for without competence, sensitivity plus complexity equals frustration.

Action-research is one way of dealing with these problems. Action-research is an approach which combines the development of competence with community action. In such a collective undertaking, people empower one another. And with the research method, people are also empowered with facts and skills of analysis. The disciplines of research are employed to cut overwhelming social problems down to human scale and to reduce the stultifying level of rhetoric which usually accompanies our efforts to solve them.

But what has research to do with action? Is it not true that a great deal of research, viewed from the activist's point of view, ends up "gathering dust?"

Research becomes a form of action when it is done not by the experts but by the people who themselves must act. A group of parents concerned about the impact of a school on their children. A cluster of people within a congregation who want to initiate a low-cost housing project. A group of high school students who want to start a youth center. Any such group can use the tools of action research--not for academic purposes, but to act out their own urgent sense of concern.

It is not so much that research done this way leads to action, though that is certainly true. More important, research done this way is a form of action. It provides a means of organizing large numbers of people around well-defined, short-term jobs. It engages people with the problem face-to-face. It builds a base of mass support for a given action--and in so doing translates the process of research into one of politics. Thus, action-research provides a path into politics for politically reticent people. In sum, action-research is a way of thinking clearly, getting the facts, and acting collectively on almost any problem that bothers people.

These propositions have not been developed out of thin air. Over the course of this project we have systematically tested them with various groups in actual field situations. In Springfield, Virginia, working with the Youth-Adult Task Force of the Metropolitan Ecumenical Training Center, we helped a church-based group of parents and high school students develop a program aimed at assessing and improving their high school. Their work went so well that they are now incorporated as the Springfield Action-research Committee, a permanent citizens' organization. In Washington, D.C., again working with M.E.T.C., we have tested action-research programs aimed at giving clergymen a better understanding, and some first-hand experience, with the structure of power in the city. In Silver Spring, Maryland, working with the Silver Spring Group Ministry, we have helped launch an action-research process which will involve several hundred laymen from local churches and lead towards some form of community organization and/or community ministry.

What we say here, then, has been well tested. It certainly demands further testing under a variety of field conditions. But we are persuaded that the basic design is well worth our trouble to tell you about and your trouble to learn.

An action-research program is one in which numbers of people can be organized around tasks of defining problems and finding facts in such a way

that the research itself becomes a form of empowerment and action. In what sense does such a program, no matter how interesting on its own merits, qualify as an intersection of "church, university and urban society?" One answer has already been hinted at. We regard action-research as a form of collective citizen power. And since "power" is the conceptual hub of our interest in church, university and city, action-research deserves our attention. But there are other reasons. In spelling them out perhaps we can better establish the context in which action-research makes sense.

The city, for many people, is a place where total complexity and utter confusion lurk just beyond the niche of sanity one has carved out for one's self. We speak often of the urbanite's sense of powerlessness. Its basic elements are complexity and confusion. The city is a "black box"; its inner workings are a mystery to us. But even worse, one side of that black box has warped up slightly and we have gotten a glimpse of the incredible labyrinth of convoluted "wiring" inside. And we are sore afraid.

It is into this context that the church, and other voluntary associations, have been urging their members to plunge. To get involved. To do something. Is it any wonder that few have really gotten involved, that so little has been done, that the results of this exhortation seem, on balance, to be minimal? We have pushed people into the face of a jungle of frustrations and have given them no machetes to hack through.

More recently, we have probably increased this frustration through the widespread use of "sensitivity training." With this vehicle many people who were never aware of how tough things are now "know," and they are virtually a-quiver with their new found-feelings. But they have no competence to do anything with or about those feelings. Nor does the sensitivity movement promise to develop any such competence among its participants. And we all know what happens to any structure, even a human frame, which is subjected to unabated quivering.

With the complexity of the city and the incompetence of the people who feel compelled to "do something," one natural reaction is to call in the experts. And thereupon enters the third member of our trinity, the university. The scholars are, surely, the ones who have pierced the mysteries of the black box and can tell us both what to do and how to do it.

Alas, such is not the case. What do we do when three, or five, or ten experts appear before us with that many different opinions on what to do and how to do it? (There is not yet an academic specialty in "arbitrating among the experts," so we cannot call on yet another expert.) What shall we think when we discover that "what to do and how to do it" is not even the question most on the minds of academics, for it is not a question much demanded by their work of research and publication and scholarly debate.

No. The layman will not find experts who have immediate answers to the problems of action in an urban context. For the experts have their own agenda. And it is very unlikely to be identical to that of the lay group. (Even if it is, the lay group will have a very hard time developing a sense of "ownership" about it, and this difficulty alone can undercut any chance of group action.) Thus, in addition to dealing with the city and dealing with their own incompetence, the lay group must now deal with the experts' agenda!

That is the context of "church, university and urban society" in which we have developed and tested action-research. Action-research is capable of meeting all three of these problems. It can help weed through the tangles of urban affairs; it can help develop competence within a lay group; and it permits that group to take advantage of expertise without being smothered by the expert's agenda. We make bold to state these claims because we have seen it happen.

It should be clear by now that action-research subsumes the normal standards of research to the standards of action. (We have not, incidentally, found the two incompatible.) What, then, are the conditions of

action? How does the normal approach meet those conditions, if at all? How does action-research?

The conditions under which people act is not a topic one could cover in less than a lifetime of exacting observation and analysis. But the following list of conditions is validated by simple daily experience:

1. People act when they have some sort of self-interest at stake.
2. People act when they have a clear and compelling diagnosis of the situation.
3. People act when they have a meaningful prescription, i.e , one which responds to the diagnosis.
4. People act when they have a sense of power to enforce the prescription.

If you compare this list with the conditions that normally obtain as we try to initiate lay action, some interesting insight is gained. In place of self-interest, we depend very heavily on a sense of altruism: "we ought to act because those people need our action." This is especially characteristic of the church, of course. And it is as true of the "hard headed" social actionists as it is of the pious; even the former give little sense of how action aimed at the ghetto would be in the interest of the suburbs.

Instead of a clear and compelling diagnosis, we tend to depend on rhetoric. The art of rhetoric is one few have mastered, so we are normally just bored. But even a master of the art can only get us energized to move. We still have no sense of where we want to go. If leaders would spend half the time on diagnosis that they do on exhortatory proclamations much more lay action would result.

Instead of a meaningful prescription which responds to the diagnosis, we tend to call for such generalized responses as "concern," "compassion," "understanding" and "love." Who shall say nay to these things? But when

that is all we ask, when our exhortations about doing something and getting involved yield no more plan of action that this, then we can expect little action on down the line.

Finally, instead of having a sense of power to act, people by and large feel powerless. Not in the least because their world has now become a cloud of verbal mist against which no amount of pushing and shoving yields that firm response that lets you know you are in contact with something real. Even more important, perhaps, is the fact that their powerlessness comes from their failure to define the world for themselves--and the failure of organizational leadership to provide a vehicle for them to do so. Leaders who want to promote lay action generally seem to feel they must assume command posts lest nothing get done. Can we now admit the fallacy of that approach in light of the general failure of lay action? Perhaps now we can see that unless the need to act, a plan for action, and the resources to execute it--unless these are "owned" by the people in question, little action will result.

Action-research, we submit, can meet many of these needs. It is a process whereby people can develop their own diagnosis and prescription--and in that process can act out their self-interest and gain a sense of power.

What are the key elements of action-research? In the next section of this paper, we will give specific programmatic answers to this question. For the moment we might do well to orient the reader by listing six basic components of any action-research program.

The first is "legitimacy." Unlike "politics," research is legitimate, and many people who would never think of entering a political fray will enter a research process. Action-research has high potential for becoming political, but by the time it does so, its participants have developed such competence that politics no longer seems frightening. This is a point worth pondering particularly with regard to the politically reticent middle-

class. The suburbs, where there is a desperate need for the "public life," may not be able to develop such a life through normal political practice. Action-research is one alternative.

There is another kind of "legitimacy" afforded by action-research, and that is the legitimacy of facts. It is sometimes easy to believe that the political estate of this country is so low that facts no longer avail. And certainly information and accuracy are not the sum total of political power. But anyone who has ever watched an unprepared citizens' group get chewed up by a hostile city council has some respect for the potency of facts.

Second, action-research is capable of defining problems on "human scale." Elsewhere in this series we have expanded on the notion that many Americans have been politically incapacitated by the magnitude with which "political problems" are defined. Militarism, racism, cynicism and the apocalypse: go ye and do something about it. There could be no better way to undermine the confidence and capacity of a people than to put all public problems far beyond their reach.

Research is always a process of scaling-down, until one comes to something definable and manageable. The constant discipline of research is one of specification--What do you mean by X?--and operationalization--What does X look like in the real world? This process, this discipline, is badly needed as a part of the development of political confidence and competence. For those qualities will return only as we define political problems in human dimension.

Third, action-research provides some interesting ways of dealing with conflict. Again, this is pertinent to the political reticence of the middle-class, for many of whom conflict is to be avoided at all costs.

One way in which action-research deals with conflict is by casting differences of opinion or belief in terms of hypotheses to be tested.

More than once, when two members of an action-research group were at each others' throats over some point, we were able to suggest that both viewpoints could be honored and the debate resolved if we took them as hypotheses to be tested in the research. From this process come some of the most insightful hypotheses. But even more important, the resolution comes not by fiat but by fact.

Action-research can also deal with conflict on a larger scale. In one situation where we were invited, but unable, to work, a youth program of the city government was under fire and the council was calling for an "objective evaluation." We suggested that the critics of this program would never believe anyone's "objective assessment" since heavy ideological concerns were at stake. Instead, we recommended, these critics should be made the core of an action-research program under expert guidance to discover for themselves the facts of the case. Should they refuse to do so, their disregard for evidence might weaken their case in the public eye. Should they agree, the facts would be gotten out for and by the crucial public.

Fourth, action-research is a way of giving life to that old maxim "knowledge is power." However, action-research moves beyond the Platonic assumptions of the statement. It recognizes that knowledge is power depending on its human context; on who has the knowledge, how it is gotten and by what criteria it is tested. The modern world has come to regard knowledge as coequal with facts. But real knowledge is more. Among other things, it is a competence to participate in the processes that give rise to facts; and it is gearing that process and its factual outcomes to the needs of people. We have already suggested the ways in which action-research is so geared. Any further demonstration of this point lies in usage.

Fifth, action-research can help develop another form of power: the power of the collectivity. We do not exclude its use by individuals, but the action-research program described here is built on the premise that numbers of people will be involved. As anyone who works in voluntary

associations knows, the development of competent, sustained and committed groups is no easy task in this society. Life has been so thoroughly privatized and individualized that the classic American strength which lay in vital "intermediary" groups is fast waning. Action-research is one way of tapping into such strength. It does so not only because many action-research tasks demand a division of labor, but also because there is power in the mutual support and interaction of a group.

The point sounds trivial and truistic until we recognize that the prime political-ministerial style of recent years has been that of the charismatic individual or the clerical Lone Ranger. Unfortunately, there are many more jobs to be done than there are individuals with a "gift of grace." Most of us have to draw more on the power of organization than on our own charisma, and yet the tools for helping us do so are few. Action-research is such a tool.

Sixth, action-research is a mode of natural and manageable human organization. The research task has clear and understandable elements; around these elements a sensible and workable division of labor can be developed. There is room in an action-research program not only for the committed core group, but also for various levels of hangers-on. In all these regards, action-research seems well suited to the requirements of most voluntary associations.

It may be helpful, finally, to suggest some things that action-research is <u>not</u>. The term "action-research" has sometimes been used in radical rhetoric. Here it has meant research aimed at points of potential political action, a type of research which was not likely to be done in the universities. But here the similarities with our approach end, for in radical usage "action-research" continues to be an "elite" activity, confined to those who are committed members of the political core group. What excites us about action-research, on the contrary, is its potential as an educational and motivational device for those who are not part of the inner core. We believe that elitism in politics and community action is one of the banes of this society. Action-research in our usage is a way of broadening the base.

Action-research must also be distinguished from the "action-reflection" technique that has been popular in the churches recently. In this approach, people are made to take some "plunge" into action and then given an opportunity, under trained leadership, to reflect on it. We have no question of the educational merits of this approach. But it is a vehicle for individual training rather than for community organization and action. Furthermore, action-research reverses the sequence of events, on the simple assumption that engaging in "reflection" (research) before, or as part of, the action will lead to more significant consequences.

II. A PROGRAM OF ACTION-RESEARCH

What is the actual shape of an action-research program. What are its major stages and components? What do people actually do? We have identified three major program stages which we sketched out below. Later in the paper we describe a series of research techniques which can be used in the context of this three-stage design.

Stage I: Defining the Problem. The first stage in an action-research program involves various problems in definition. And the first of these is, of course, defining the central issue around which the program will revolve. Sometimes this issue will come ready-made; either it will be clear to everyone that "something must be done about X," or a core group of leaders will have such clarity and want to bring others along. At other times, however, there will be a much more general malaise. People will know "something is wrong," but there will be no clarity, let alone consensus, about what it is.

With rare exceptions, community leadership is faced with the initial task of "bringing people along," both in terms of their perceptions of problems and their willingness to do something about them. And this first stage of an action-research program offers some excellent opportunities for doing just that. For example, one might begin defining the problem by holding neighborhood "hearings" to discover what issues are on peoples' minds. Or a church might turn one of its Sunday services over to some a program for eliciting people's concerns. Or a series of living-room discussions throughout the community; or a series in the local newspaper with response invited.

The devices available for collectively defining an issue are numerous, and the point we wish to make is simple. Where most research begins with a focus in the mind of the researcher, action-research begins by developing that focus out of the larger community. It is important to do so even when the leader thinks he knows what's on peoples' minds, for it is critical that an action-research program be "owned" by the community from the very outset.

The next step in Stage I is to turn the central issue into a researchable question. This is not an easy step but it is a critical one, for it dictates the shape and probably the success of the research.

Suppose, for example, that "the lack of adequate community health facilities" had emerged as the central issue. Phrased that way, we have an area of concern but no focus for research. Given this central issue, there are a number of researchable questions that could be framed, and each of them points in a different research direction:

Does our community lack adequate health facilities?
Why does our community lack adequate health facilities?
How can our community obtain adequate health facilities?

It may be that the project should pursue all these questions and more. Or perhaps you can take on only one of them. The point is that you must state the central issue(s) in terms of a question which has a research answer. Thus the question, Should our community have adequate health facilities?, is not amenable to a research answer. It is essentially a moral question.

It is very important when taking this step to look for key words or concepts which need clarification. For example, in the illustration we have been working with the term "adequate" is still undefined. Yet it is a crucial term, on which the whole issue hinges. Unless we can develop a researchable definition of "adequate" we might as well abandon the project now, for all the data in the world will be of no avail until "adequate" is given some empirical referent. For example, you might discover that the structure of your community in terms of age, sex and socio-economic status suggests a predictable rate of accidents and disease; and that this, in turn, dictates a given ratio of health facilities and personnel. Until we have such a concrete description of the key term we can prove nothing.

This problem becomes especially acute when we are dealing with issues like "the maldistribution of power" in the community. Here, the term "power"

demands specification; and it will be much more difficult to handle than the term "adequate." But we cannot avoid the issue.

It should be noted that this task of defining a researchable question is best done by one or two people, not by a large group. The larger group can be helpful in getting leads to what might be meant by a term (through "brainstorming," for example) but the final analysis and decision cannot be made by committee.

The next step in Stage I involves generating some tentative answers to the researchable question. In the language of research, these answers are called hypotheses. Perhaps it seems backwards to answer the question before the research is done; is it not the purpose of the research to answer the question? Yes, but the problem is that any question has a very large number of potential answers. The researcher must decide on the kind of answer he wants to test out since it will be impossible for him to test all possible solutions. That is the function of the hypothesis.

Suppose, for example, that our central issue were political apathy, and that our research question were, "Why do so few people in the community belong to either of the two political action groups?" Among the answers one might give to that question are:

Because the organizations meet at inconvenient times.
Because people in our community are too timid, or feel inadequate to participate in groups.
Because most people in our community don't see anything that needs to be changed.
Because most people in our community are so overwhelmed with the need for change they see no chance of doing anything.
Because most people in our community work at jobs far distant from home with long hours.
Because the agenda of the groups don't match the agenda of the people.
Because the turnover of the community's population is so high.

Obviously, the list of tentative answers or hypotheses is endless. The researcher must make some informed guess as to which hypotheses are

most pertinent and build his research around them. Clearly, this is a critical guess. Suppose that political participation is low simply because the organizations meet at inconvenient times, but suppose the researcher had thought that this was such a trivial hypothesis he would not pursue it. Obviously, he would not get the key information he was seeking. His research would end up with a series of non-answers to the problem.

Generating a list of hypotheses is another point in action-research where larger numbers of people can and should be involved. A "brainstorming" session in which a group guesses at as many hypotheses as possible can be a great deal of fun; it also taps a reservoir of intuitive knowledge about the community. Once again, however, the final analysis and selection of hypotheses to be tested is probably a one-man job. It is well-nigh impossible for committees to do this kind of work.

There are certain criteria to be invoked in the selection of final hypotheses. One, of course, is salience: does the hypothesis seem to have a reasonable relation to the problem? Another, equally important criterion is accessibility and leverage: does the hypothesis point to factors which an action group can take action on? There is little sense in proving, for instance, that problem "X" is intimately related to the age and sex structure of your community, when there is likely little your group can do about that fact. It may be that problem "X" is also related to other factors which are within reach of the action group. Hypotheses which point toward such factors should be favored.

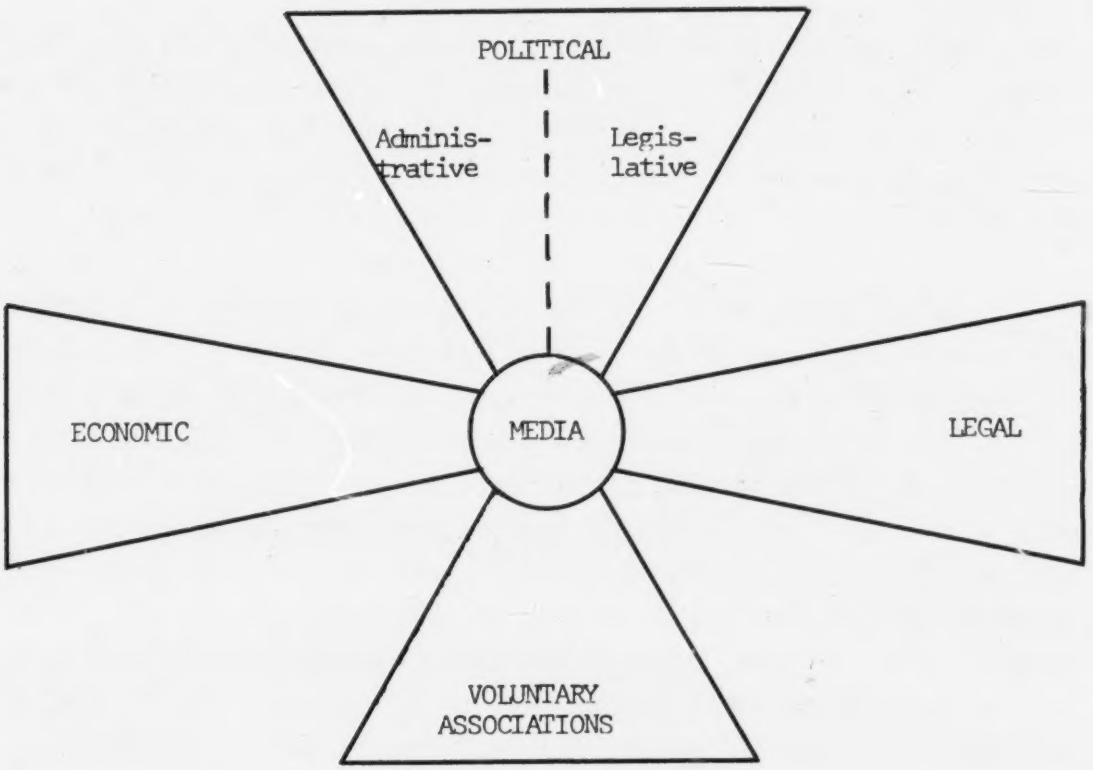
Two additional hints may be helpful for the critical task of selecting hypotheses. First, use the library, especially a good university library. Scholarly books and journals are filled with studies on every problem under the sun, and some of these studies may help you decide which hypotheses are worth pursuing and which not. (However, as noted above, scholarly research tends to get done for different purposes than action-research is geared to. Do not, therefore, get discouraged if the scholars seem to have ignored your problem or pushed it aside as of little interest. Remember their interests are different from yours!) Second, keeping in mind these

same caveats, employ the services of university experts themselves. Third, conduct a small exploratory study to help weed out the good hypotheses from the bad. Even a handful of interviews on the problem of adequate health facilities may greatly sharpen your understanding of what should be tested on a larger scale.

Finally, in this section on the development of hypotheses, a reminder of the useful "group dynamics" function hypotheses may serve. Frequently action-oriented groups get hung up on simple differences of perception or opinion that keep people from moving ahead with the job. When the group is working within the context of "action," pure and simple, these differences often reach great rhetorical heights and become insurmountable hurdles. Within the context of action-research, however, we have an opportunity to cast differences in the form of hypotheses to be tested. This way, all points of view can be honored and all energies engaged--without compromising the direction and integrity of the program. And once the research returns are in, we will have empirical answers to our differences of opinion and a consensus will be much more easily built.

We have sketched out the steps in Stage I on the assumption that you will be building the action-research program from the ground up. There is another way to proceed with Stage I, however, a way that is probably more suited to educational purposes than to building a movement. Here, we begin not with a blank canvas but with a particular "model" to be researched. The model is used to direct the group's thinking and its activity. Its drawback is that it takes initiative from the group and, in so doing, probably prevents the full development of a sense of "ownership" and urgency. Its asset is the direction it gives for a short-term attempt at high-impact education.

Here is an illustration drawn from a program we did with Metropolitan Ecumenical Training Center designed to introduce clergymen to the realities of power in the Washington, D.C. area. We employed a model of urban power developed by Dr. Stanley Hallett of "The Commons." Called the "sector model" it depicts power in five basic areas, arranged schematically as shown below:



The first reaction to such a model, from someone who knows the city, is "How nice it would be if only it were that way!" The model seems to depict a balance of power between the sectors, with messages being transmitted through the media in full view of the public.

Naturally, things are not that way. But the model is not meant to describe reality; it is meant to be a tool with which to analyze reality. It is put forward as an "ideal type"; that is, as a set of balanced variables which may be of quite a different shape and relation to one another in the real world. The model is meant simply to direct the research; the data from the research allow us to "redraw" the model in accordance with reality. Thus, we find many messages going directly between sectors rather than through the media; we find a frequent imbalance of economic power; we find a fragmentation of the voluntary associations sector.

In the program alluded to, we used this model around the particular issue of mass transit in metropolitan Washington. Program participants

went out and interviewed key transit figures from each of the power sectors, then came back to redesign the model in accordance with their findings and speculate on the action implications.

The impact of this program came, we think, from its action-research foundation. Had the same facts been gathered by experts and then presented to the group the learning and impetus would not have been the same. With the action-research design, the group actually had the experience of getting in touch with that elusive thing called "the power structure"; and they did so within the confines of a theoretical model which enabled them to make sense and strategy out of what they had seen. Thus, the disciplines of research created a viable context for learning and action.

Stage II: Developing Research Instruments. The first stage of an action-research program is the most critical, for in it one makes decisions which will irrevocably shape the entire project. During Stage II the main task is to construct those research tools or instruments which will enable you to test the hypotheses developed during Stage I. These instruments often take the form of questionnaires, interview guides or other data formats, and are used in a wide variety of research techniques (which will be detailed later in this manual).

In designing research instruments, one is actually moving from abstract concepts to specific "indicators" of those concepts in the real world. For example, suppose our central problem were that of peoples' attitudes towards religion. Suppose our research question were, "Why are so few people in this community 'religious'?" In Stage I we would have specified that concept somewhat; we would have decided whether "religious" referred to church involvement, to theological beliefs, to "good works," or whatever. Now we must decide what particular indicators of behavior or attitude will suffice to measure our concept.

For example, if we had decided that church involvement was the essential meaning of "religiousness" as far as we were concerned, we would now have to decide how to measure church involvement. Perhaps attendance at

weekly services would do it. Perhaps simple membership is enough. Or perhaps we want to combine several such elements into a more complex measure. It goes without saying that this is a critical point in the research design, for it determines what particular evidence you will collect, and that in turn determines the extent to which you will be able to answer your central question.

At this point there are again opportunities for the meaningful involvement of groups of people. For instance, you might form several small work groups to draft initial versions of the research instrument. There is much to be gained from such an experience beyond the production of a research tool, for this is the point at which common concepts or words must be given final clarification. Thus, as people debate what they really mean by "religiousness" some vital learning may well go on.

During Stage II one also has to make decisions about the kind of vehicle in which the data will be collected. Thus, once "religiousness" is defined in terms of specific indicators, one must decide how and where those indicators will be sought. For example, one could simply make headcounts at local church services and related activities for measures of involvement. Or one could interview ministers, priests and rabbis for some sense (or statistics) on the state of their congregations. Another way is through questionnaires sent in the mail to a sample of community members; yet another approach involves personal interviews with those same people.

For action-research, as a general rule, choose the methodology that will involve the largest number of people. In the case cited above, person-to-person interviews would probably be preferable to the other techniques. There are limits on this rule, of course; you may not have sufficient people, or the numbers to be studied may be so large, that you have to adopt a more "efficient" way of gaining data. But when possible, chose a method which involves people meeting people, for this is the prime source of human motivation and action. If an action-research group

has rubbed shoulders with (and noses in) the human data of some human problem, the depths of their own insight and feelings are likely to be greater than if they had received the data at second- or third-hand.

Too often, research has functioned to keep people apart, and to keep them well-removed from problems. Action-research turns those tables, and uses the research process itself as a vehicle for human interaction and exposure. You should choose research techniques accordingly.

Finally, in Stage II, it may be well to do a small "pilot study" before plunging into Stage III. Such a pilot study will enable you to give your research instruments a rough test; frequently, mistakes that would be disasterous when made on a large scale can be spotted and corrected in a small-scale trial run. Furthermore, the pilot test, if conducted on the action-research group itself, enables the group to take stock and come to a point of collective reflection on what they have done before moving their work into a larger arena.

Stage III: Data Collection and Analysis. There is nothing particularly open or imaginative about Stage III, for it has been thoroughly shaped by decisions made in Stages I and II. In Stage III, the research instruments are employed, the data are gathered and analyzed, and conclusions reached. Some of the particular techniques you might use are described later in this paper. Here we shall limit ourselves to more general comments.

Stage III presents some important opportunities for the involvement of numbers of people. For example, if you are using a neighborhood survey it might be well to do your interviewing on a Saturday morning, reassembling that afternoon over a late lunch to discuss your experiences. For many of the participants, the day will have given some new and even startling insights into the community: capitalize on that fact and what it might mean for building a community of concern.

During the course of the interviewing, if that is the approach you choose, you have a chance not only to collect data but also to inform many

additional people of the concerns and objectives of your group. You might leave a postcard with people interviewed, asking them to return it if they are interested in attending a meeting at which you will discuss the results of the research. In this way you can build a mailing list, and more and more people get involved in the life of the action-research group.

It is in this stage that the maxim "knowledge is power" begins to come to life. If you have done your work well, you will probably possess the most reliable, up-to-date body of knowledge available on problem "X." This is true even when you are dealing in realms of professionalism like the public schools. One of our experimental groups was told that it had better information on what was going on at a particular high school than either the high school administration or the county school board!

Capitalize on this as various institutions and publics begin to seek the fruits of your labors. Establish requirements for access to your information--e.g., willingness to engage in a series of educational meetings and to express one's self with regards to solutions. Using your hard-won knowledge in this and other ways you can gain genuine leverage on a given problem.

If the reader is now saying, "OK, we've done the research; where is the action?," he has missed the point. For the very process of this style of research, with its involvements of people, is a form of action. Suppose your focus had been a public school (as was true in several of our experimental groups). By this time you would have created a series of conversations between parents, students, teachers and administrators that could have happened no other way. Although what ostensibly occurred was "research," the real function of these conversations would have been the airing of complaints, the testing of opinions, the winning of allies (and discovery of enemies)--all of them "political" functions. This itself is action, and by this stage in an action-research program one is likely to have all the action, or potential action, he desires.

That is, it is not a matter of taking dead data and translating them into action programs. The action is already there. The research process,

properly understood and executed, has seen to that. Thus, we do not have a "Stage IV" in an action-research program, labelled "From Data to Action." For this process has been going on throughout the first three stages.

By way of summary, the following seem minimal in constructing an action-research program:

Stage I: Identify central issue through community process.
Define issue as researchable question.
Develop hypotheses regarding research question.

Stage II: Locate indicators for concepts.
Construct research instruments and design.
Pilot test.

Stage III: Collect data.
Analyze data and draw conclusions.

All stages: Maximize ways of involving people in research process.

III. SOME ACTION-RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

We turn now to some specific research techniques which might be designed into Stage II and used in Stage III. For each of them we shall try to outline the basic procedure and point to one or two special problems. Full competence in any one of these methods would require instruction far beyond the bounds of this paper. All we can do here is provide an inventory of sorts and, in the bibliography at the end of the manual, suggest some sources for further reading and consultation. (This might also be a point at which to draw on local research experts, much as we suggested for Stage I.)

Before listing specific techniques, it is important to note that any one of them can be used to different research ends. It is important to be clear from the beginning what end one has in view.

One research goal is simply to describe what a particular phenomenon or population looks like. How many residents in the city support the administration's policy in Vietnam. Another research goal is to explain why a particular descriptive finding is true. Why, for example, do so many people in the city support the Vietnam policy; is it related to socio-economic status?

Yet another research goal which is compatible with both descriptive and explanatory studies is comparison. Thus, how do residents of your city compare with those of the outlying suburbs on support for the policy in Vietnam?

Once the researcher is clear on his general goal, he must choose among a variety of specific methods. Frequently he chooses not simply one, but two or more, or a blend of several. In this manual, we shall discuss eight such possibilities: participant-observation, survey research, depth interviewing, projective techniques, sociometry, the use of public records, content analysis of various media, and a category of methods known as "unobtrusive measures." In describing each one, we shall also have occasion to refer to general problems of research common to all of them.

Participant-observation is at once the most natural and most unnatural, the simplest and the most difficult, of research methods. All of us are participants every day--in grocery lines, in work situations, in crowds on buses, and so forth. Sometimes we even observe. But observing in some systematic, reliable way--and observing the "right" things--while at the same time participating with some of the naturalness of everyday life, that is a real trick.

Suppose you were interested in an overview of churches in your community with an eye to the range and types of formal ministries being offered. Quick data could be obtained by sending two-person teams to participate and observe at all the services of a given Sunday morning. But observe what? The possibilities are endless: one could observe total numbers of parishioners, style and content of sermons, rate of interaction after the service, proportion of men, young, non-white, etc. in attendance, type of hymns chosen, etc. The research group must sit down well in advance and decide what they want to look for, and perhaps make a couple of "dry runs" to make sure that they have not overlooked anything important. They should be encouraged to let their imaginations roam; e.g., one may discover a great deal about the social class a church is aiming at by analyzing the style and content of hymns.

Remember that members of the action-research group can do valuable participant-observation in the contexts where they work each day. You could, for example, do a decent study of radio-listening habits by having the auto mechanics in your group keep tabs on the settings of radio dials in the cars they work on. Again, the possibilities are endless, limited only by imagination.

The second type of research, survey research, is the one most people are familiar with. Typically, this mode of research revolves around a questionnaire administered by mail or by interviewers from the action-research group. As we have already suggested, this mode maximizes human interaction and exposure, which are prime aims of the action-research process.

Technically, there are two pivotal problems with survey research: defining the target population and sample, and constructing the questionnaire.

The first step is to define the population or universe you want to learn something about. Is it all citizens in your community? All property owners? All church members? All barbers? The decision is yours. It simply must be made self-consciously and with care.

Typically, the population which interests you is too large to permit interviewing every member of it, so the researcher must take a "sample" (i.e., a small group which adequately represents the larger population). The easiest way to draw a sample is from a complete list of the total population. Thus, to some extent, the question of what population to study is answered by the question, "For what population are complete lists available?" One could obtain fairly accurate lists of all church members (from the churches), of all barbers (from the phone book), of all property owners (from the tax rolls), etc. But complete lists of other groups--for example, all teenagers--would be much harder to come by.

Furthermore, one has to be careful not to accept biased lists, for one then gets biased results. It may look like a telephone book comprises a total listing of community residents. In fact, it may exclude those not wealthy enough to have a phone.

Assuming that a reliable list is available, the researcher then picks every "nth" name, depending on the size of the sample he wants to work with and the size of the total population. Those chosen in this random procedure then become recipients of the questionnaire.

The second aspect of survey research, questionnaire construction, is a difficult art, and there is room for only a few words about it here. The questionnaire represents the researcher's best guesses as to what factors are relevant to the phenomenon he has chosen to study. If he misses some key factors, there is no way to recoup them after the survey is

complete. So the questionnaire must be built with an eye to comprehensiveness--and yet not be so huge that few of the people sampled will trouble to wade through it.

There are several small but important details to be observed in developing a questionnaire. The first questions asked should be the most innocuous and non-threatening in the list; ask the "difficult" questions only after you have gotten a person well along in the instrument. Write, rewrite and edit all questions with an eye to ambiguity and other sources of bias: if a word means one thing to one person and something else to another, the responses to that item are worthless. The larger the sample, the greater the necessity for "closed-ended" questions; i.e., those with multiple choice answers. Otherwise the amount of data becomes utterly unmanageable. In constructing answer options for such questions, be sure that the categories are exhaustive and mutually exclusive. Suppose the question involves the extent of a person's education. The answer categories "(8-9 years) (10-11 years)" are not exhaustive (suppose the person had 9-1/2 years of schooling), while the answer categories "(8-9 years) (9-10 years)" are not mutually exclusive. Finally, a questionnaire should in every respect guarantee the anonymity of the respondent. Not only should the obvious means of identification be lacking, but no questions so specific as to make identification possible should be asked.

With a mail-out questionnaire, every effort should be made to make the survey legitimate for its recipients. A full statement of the nature of the action-research group and its purpose should be made. (Publicity in a local newspaper is an excellent source of legitimacy; refer to it in the cover letter--or give interviewers copies of the clipping for door-to-door polls.) The cover letter and questionnaire should be neatly and attractively printed. Include a self-addressed, postage-paid return envelope. And be prepared to send follow-up letters to those who do not respond. As a rule of thumb, expect one-third of the sample to respond after the initial mailing; one-third after a first follow-up; and then dribbles in response to further follow-ups. Any mail survery which gains

returns of over 70-75% is doing well. Obviously, for the sake of accuracy, the higher the return rate, the better.

A third type of research is often used before or after the survey method. This is depth interviewing, or the case study. The depth interview does not allow the researcher to cover as broad a range of people and topics as the survey does. But it does permit him to explore, probe and discover unexpected outcomes in ways the preformed survey questionnaire prohibits. Especially when you are dealing with subtle and tricky topics (like religious or political belief, or prejudice) the depth interview may be an essential preliminary to constructing a good questionnaire. Or it may be the only usable method.

As with participant-observation the depth interviewer must have some prior notion of the general questions he wishes to ask during a one or two hour conversation. He may, indeed, have a list of quite specific queries to get good comparative data from several cases. But the strength of the depth interview is in the researcher's ability to discover and explore matters he had not even considered before. Above all, the depth interview must remain flexible and adaptable.

Many of the rules of questionnaire construction also apply to constructing depth interview schedules. One way to reduce the threat inherent in some questions is to put those questions on cards and hand them to the interviewee rather than asking aloud. Thus, a person may be less reluctant to give you the number that corresponds to his income category on a typed card than to state his income orally. This is simply another illustration of the flexibility of the depth interview situation; it should be capitalized upon.

A fourth research technique, projective testing, is often used in depth interviewing. The projective test is simply a non-verbal stimulant presented to an interviewee in hopes of getting a meaningful response. The theory is that these responses may be even more meaningful than usual because the stimulant has more richness and depth than mere words. Thus,

while asking a person his opinions on race relations may elicit a stereotyped response, presenting that same person with photos or works of art which bear on race relations may yield much more interesting data.

While photos and paintings are the most frequently used projective devices, any non-verbal means of communication qualifies. Thus, one could use pieces of sculpture or music. It may sometimes be possible, especially in classroom situations, to get data by having the respondent create his own non-verbal communication. Thus, a great deal might be learned from having someone build a collage on topic "X" from magazine clippings.

A fifth research technique, sociometry, can be incorporated into the methods described above or used on its own. The word itself is a barbarism which refers to the charting of relationships between people based on data gathered from those people and/or from external sources. Our interest in it stems from the simple observation that actual human relationships generally have more to do with the way things go than do organization charts or formal statements of authority. Thus, sociometry is used in analyses of community power: "who knows whom" may be more important in the distribution of power than the popular votes cast for mayor.

The mass media, especially the social pages, are a source of information which can be treated sociometrically. On this level, sociometry is little more than a sophisticated version of the old gossip column teasers. But simple information of this sort may help explain public and private decisions which are otherwise incomprehensible.

Sociometric analysis can also employ data from interviews. By asking questions on who people relate to--as authorities, as friends, as enemies, etc.--we can eventually construct a pictorial web of relationships which may go far toward explaining why certain things happen the way they do.

A sixth type of research utilizes various public and quasi-public records. For example, every jurisdiction issues an annual report and

statement of budget. There are a variety of legislative documents; e.g., the massive Congressional Record. There are county codes, transcripts of hearings, birth, death and marriage records. The list is long and complex. The trick is to become familiar with agencies and people whose business it is to know what records are available.

Perhaps the main limitation on the use of public records is the researcher's imagination. For example, most of us would not be particularly interested in the fact that reports are available on the revenue derived from downtown parking meters. But one researcher used such information to measure the impact of a strike on downtown shopping, a study which could have profound action implications. Less profound, but still basic, was a study which correlated changes in a city's water pressure with the timing of events on T.V. In Chicago, a 1963 study showed that at the end of that year's tense Rose Bowl game, the water pressure plummeted precipitously.

A seventh research technique is called content analysis and is especially useful in the study of the mass media. Here the researcher analyzes the content of new stories, for example, with some predetermined hypothesis. Thus, the researcher may be interested in how a suburban paper differs from a city paper in its treatment of a given issue. He could make a rough assessment and let it go at that. But with context analysis he has some data to stand on. For example, he might decide to count the numbers and kinds of adjectives used in stories about this issue in the two papers. The ability to demonstrate that paper "X" uses more negative adjectives than paper "Y" helps build a more solid case than simple generalizations.

For example, a researcher recently did a piece of content analysis to determine the validity of Agnew's accusations of biased news coverage. In analyzing the commentary after a major Presidential address on Vietnam, the researcher concluded that the bulk of the commentary was neutral, and that of the remainder the favorable somewhat outweighed the unfavorable.

This kind of careful analysis can sometimes advance a debate further than another round of rhetoric.

An eighth and final research technique has been labelled unobtrusive measures. Sometimes we need to study problems in which the "intrusion" of the researcher makes the problem impossible to study. For example, suppose we want to discover the extent of drinking in a town which has officially "gone dry." Clearly we are not likely to get much from door-to-door interviews: people will be reluctant to say anything except that they follow the law. In the face of such difficulty, one researcher invented an imaginative unobtrusive measure. He went up and down alleys counting the number of discarded liquor bottles. Messy, but it worked.

We have already mentioned some techniques which might be considered "unobtrusive"; e.g., the use of public records. But it seemed worthwhile to create this separate category of research techniques if for no other reason than to remind you that imagination is critical to good research. Consider the following. In Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry the rate at which floor tiles around exhibits wear out is used as a measure of the relative popularity of exhibits. Library withdrawals (quantity and kind) have been used to measure the impact of TV on a community. The size of fictional families in popular magazines has been used to track chances in conceptions of the "ideal family" through American history. With imagination, one will find a wide variety of research applications in the materials and experiences of everyday life.

IV. ORGANIZING A PROGRAM OF ACTION-RESEARCH

In our experience with action-research, we have found it useful in at least three kinds of organizational settings. Each of these has different needs and rhythms. With the hope that one or more of them may resemble the reader's situation, we shall comment briefly on them.

The first situation is one in which you are trying to create something from nothing. You, and a few others perhaps, know that a problem exists which demands attention. But there is no existing organization to deal with it--or the groups working on it are doing a poor job.

We have worked in a situation like this with the tools of action-research. Here, the goal was to move toward a process of community organization by creating a spin-off group from a number of churches in the community. This group was to research the need for community organization, involving enough parishioners to provide the ministers a core of competent and supportive laymen.

Our experience here was that action-research proved to be a more than adequate "come-on" to get a group of people committed to a project whose boundaries were very fuzzy (and some of whose portents were grave). We tried to counter the vagueness somewhat by putting a strict time limit on the commitment: the group was to meet weekly for no longer than four months. And by using the stages of action-research (spelled out in section III above) we were able to schedule that time in a reassuring way, though the substance and outcomes of the process remained as undefined as ever.

Of course, this was not a pure case of creation ex nihilo. The participants in this effort were all from the churches: that not only gave them a common bond in an otherwise amorphous situation, it also broadly legitimated a movement whose direction was very unclear. But it was still a valid test, for it seems very unlikely that the community activist will get much closer to creating something from nothing than this. Or it would probably be unwise to try to do so. Every new being has its

roots somewhere; churches, civic organizations, interest groups. We believe that action-research is a means for bringing new constellations of people and concerns out of the old.

A second situation became even more familiar to us in our experiments with action-research. Here, a small ad hoc group with a common concern has been meeting for some weeks. They have defined and redefined their concern; they have shared anecdotes about how the problem has pressed on their individual lives; their feeling of inadequacy has grown proportionally to their sense of the magnitude of the problem.

We have encountered several such groups when their state of mind was frustration, pure and simple. And again we have found action-research a helpful tool. One critical variable is the length of time the group has been floundering in frustration; it is possible for a group to reach a point where they cannot disband but have no energy for a genuinely new departure. But assuming the group is not at that point, action-research can rescue it by spelling out some clear and simple steps toward the analysis and specification of the problem. When a group sees this potential and had known only flailing before it can be a source of new life.

Finally, there is the standing, well-organized association whose normal mode of operation does not seem adequate to a new challenge. Thus, a PTA or a church or a civic association may confront a problem on which they need a much broader base of data and support than they typically require. With very little trouble, assuming the presence of alert leadership, action-research can be used in such a case. The lack of trouble comes from the fact that action-research seems ideologically neutral. An organization always develops a style of operation which reflects its ideology. The demand to adopt a new style can easily be read as a challenge to the underlying philosophy. But action-research seems like a simple extension of the common norms of efficiency and rationality, and these are seldom perceived as threatening by organizations (even though they should be!).

In all of these cases, action-research has proven to be a useful means of organizing energy and activity among different kinds of core groups. But there is another organizational dimension to a good program of action-research, and that is letting others, sometimes many others, "buy into" the process begun by the core group. Only in this way does action-research end up with political support and momentum as well as data.

This need corresponds nicely with a basic fact of certain types of data-gathering: they require a good deal of simple leg work. Obviously this is not true of all forms of research, or all phases of any research process. Library research is often best done by one or two people. And in every research process there are points (e.g., final editing of a questionnaire) where one or two clear heads can accomplish much more than a committee.

As we have urged before, the best action-research designs are those that have significant places for the involvement of large numbers of people. Thus, the use of survey research, where many people are needed to do one or two interviews each, is preferable to a design which depends exclusively on the contributions of a small handful. Given a good design by the action-research steering committee, several hundred interviewers can, in a single day, be gathered, instructed, and set loose to complete a door-to-door survey. In this way a broad base of involvement, concern and first-hand exposure to the problem can be built.

Here is the division of labor developed by one of the groups we worked with. This group did a before-and-after study of the impact of a single semester on students at the local high school. By employing numbers of people in the various tasks involved, they developed a significant organization which has now become a potent force in the life of the school.

1. Co-chairmen of the Steering Committee. Will coordinate tasks and chair meetings. Will depend heavily on other committee members to organize and supervise their own areas of work.

2. Public Relations Chairman. Will have heaviest responsibility at times of community hearings (to develop issue and gain visibility) and research report (in public forums). Continuous responsibility for dealing with local news media, publicity for community events, and regular newsletter to a mailing list of interested people.

3. Five Worker Recruiters. Will recruit one hundred interviewers from community groups and churches and by searching out unaffiliated people. Will hold living room "brainstorming" sessions with these recruits to develop ideas for questionnaire (thus giving interviewers a sense of involvement in the final questionnaire).

4. Events Manager. Will schedule and coordinate community events--secure speakers, arrange meeting places, etc. Will develop morale-building events for workers (e.g., showing of film "High School").

5. Four Questionnaire-Preparation and Field Interview Supervisors. Will work with Worker Recruiters at living room "brainstorming" sessions; then work with consultant to put the questionnaire together in a technically valid form. Will get lists of names from the school, draw random samples and make interview assignments. Will set up training sessions for interviewers, supervise interviewing process, and be available for problems that arise during course of interviews.

6. Two Data Analysis Supervisors. Will receive completed questionnaires, collate and do basic correlations, and put data in form for presentation in newsletters, in community forums, etc.

This division of labor was accompanied by a schedule, with dates, of the times at which various tasks would have to be performed and the ways in which tasks would relate to one another. With this clear and concise organizational format, the group was able to execute a major project whose impact continues to be felt long after the compilation of the data. Indeed, they have incorporated as a permanent non-profit community organization and intend to use action-research as a basic approach to community problems for the forseeable future.

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